

WASHINGTON, DC - Today Congressman Rob Wittman joined four other Virginia Congressman in supporting H.R. 1385, the Thomasina E. Jordan Indian Tribes of Virginia Federal Recognition Act of 2009 introduced by Rep. Jim Moran (VA-08). Additionally, Wittman added his support to the bill at a hearing today before the Natural Resources Committee. The bill would extend federal recognition to the Chickahominy Indian Tribe, the Chickahominy Indian Tribe-Eastern Division, the Upper Mattaponi Tribe, the Rappahannock Tribe, Inc., the Monacan Indian Nation, and the Nansemond Indian Tribe, which have sought federal recognition through legislation for years.

"As a cosponsor of H.R. 1385, I look forward to Congressional action on this important effort to federally recognize Virginia Indian tribes," said Wittman.

"These Virginia Indian tribes are important culturally and historically to the Commonwealth. Tribal ancestors from these tribes populated coastal Virginia when Captain John Smith settled at Jamestown in 1607. These 'first contact' tribes have been intertwined with the birth of our nation for over 400 years and continue to preserve a culture and heritage important to Virginia and the nation," said Wittman.

In 1983 the Commonwealth of Virginia granted state recognition to the six tribes. The Constitution grants Congress authority in matters pertaining to tribes, including authority to grant federal recognition. Specifically, the First Congressional District includes the tribal seats of the Upper Mattaponi in King William County and the Rappahannock Tribe in King and Queen County. In 2007, the House voted unanimously in support of federal recognition for the tribes. The bill was stalled in the Senate during Congress' 110th session.

Congressman Rob Wittman represents the First District of Virginia. He was elected to his first full term in November 2008 and serves on the Natural Resources Committee and the Armed Services Committee where he is the Ranking Member of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee.